SEA Europe calls upon the European Commission to adopt an EU sectoral strategy to boost Europe's global maritime technology leadership

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On 22 October, SEA Europe – the Shipyards and Maritime Equipment Association – published its White Paper, entitled "*Maritime Technology in Europe: A Strategic Solution Provider for Major Societal Challenges*".

In this White Paper, SEA Europe presents its Vision for 2030 and beyond. This vision is based on seven distinct pillars and four major messages. The first message is the need for the EU to recognise maritime technology as a strategic sector for Europe. The second message is the need for the EU to adopt a holistic and coherent dedicated sectoral strategy, with effective and concrete policies and financial tools, allowing the sector to cope with its global and societal challenges, whilst harvesting the benefits from emerging opportunities. The third message is the need for the European Commission to boost Europe's global leadership in complex shipbuilding and advanced maritime equipment manufacturing. The fourth and last message is the need for the EU to enhance the political visibility of the maritime technology sector, either through a "European Maritime Coordinator" or through a coordinating European Commission service.

To that end, SEA Europe's White Paper presents a series of concrete proposals, based on 7 pillars, such as the creation of adequate framework conditions for a true global level playing field in maritime technology, improving access to finance and to foreign markets and the need to recognize the role of the maritime technology sector as a solution provider for solving major societal challenges, such as climate change.

"*Today, Europe has a thriving maritime technology sector*", says Christophe Tytgat, SEA Europe's Secretary General. "*Europe's shipyards are global leaders in complex shipbuilding and Europe's maritime equipment manufacturers are global leaders in the production and supply of (advanced) maritime equipment, systems and technologies. These complex products are strategic for Europe as they help the EU to achieve its key policies and long-term ambitions. They are also strategic for Europe's maritime cluster, Blue Economy, defence and security*" That is why we call upon the European Commission to recognise the strategic dimension of the maritime technology sector in Europe.

"*Besides being a strategic sector for Europe, Europe's shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers are also solution providers for tackling major societal challenges*" complements Kjersti Kleven, SEA Europe's chairwoman. "The maritime technology sector will be instrumental in helping the *European Commission to implement its "Green Deal for Europe" and to become a climate neutral society by 2050. In this respect, the maritime technology sector is fully committed to build zero-emission short sea ships and inland barges by 2030 and to make all shipping a zero-emission mode of transport by 2050,* Mrs Kleven underlined.

"*However, to enable Europe's maritime technology sector to fulfil its role as a strategic solution provider for major societal challenges and to maintain Europe's current global leadership in complex products, the European Commission – with the full support of the EU Member States and the European Parliament – needs to adopt urgently a sectoral industrial strategy to enable the sector to cope with its many challenges, needs, threats and opportunities*", Christophe Tytgat added. "Whilst the sector's current *outlook looks positive, the EU cannot be complacent as foreign competitors, mainly in Asia, are now targeting Europe's global leadership in complex maritime products. The lack of a global level playing field and the current absence of any effective international or European instruments to rebalance the level playing-field and to protect European companies from unfair competitive practices contributed to Europe losing its merchant shipbuilding and part of its offshore building industry, to the benefit of Asia in the past. Without any adequate and effective sector-specific policies, Europe runs a serious risk to lose also its complex shipbuilding and advanced maritime equipment manufacturing industries. No action is not an option this time as it would undeniably have devastating consequences for Europe position as a global maritime leader*", Mr. Tytgat concluded.

A copy of the summary of the White Paper can be found here.

Background Note: *SEA Europe represents close to 100% of the European shipbuilding industry in 16 nations, encompassing the production, maintenance, repair and conversion of all types of ships and floating structures, commercial as well as naval, including the full supply chain with the various producers of maritime systems, equipment material, and services.*

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